

THE COMMON INDIAN NIGHTJAR (*C. asiaticus asiaticus*, Lath.).—Common about the Siwaliks at Chandigarh as noted by Mr. Hugh Whistler (J.B.N.H.S., Vol. XXVII., p. 367). And also about the outskirts of forests and in the stoney nullahs at Kalka, 2,500 ft., above which it does not appear to ascend. The note of this species has been often described; it is usually uttered from some elevated position and is very ventriloquistic.

A female obtained 17th. February had the ovaries much enlarged and would have laid within a month.

It is also common in the scrub jungle about Ladwa, Karnal Dist. The status of the species is not clear.

AMBALA, 18th November 1922.

A. E. JONES.

NO. XV.—APPEARANCE OF THE MUTE SWAN (*CYGNUS OLOR*)
NEAR POONA.

This is, I believe, the first time that a specimen of the above has been recorded anywhere so far south in India as the Bombay Deccan.

I was out at Kesurdi, a small tank on the Poona-Sholapur Road, about 23 miles east of Poona, on the evening of 11th November 1922.

On first arriving at the tank about 4 p.m. I saw nothing from the lower end except a large flock of common red-headed pochard in the middle, but after walking along beneath the bund for a short distance to get a closer view, on again looking over the bund I saw the swan in the middle of the pochard, so that he had apparently only just arrived.

The bird, when I first saw him, was about 150 yards away, and I watched him carefully with my glasses. He gradually came towards me until he was only about 100 yards distant, and I was in hopes that I might be able to get a shot but he never came any nearer. After remaining for about a quarter of an hour swimming slowly about and feeding, he flew off in a south-westerly direction so far as I could see, but I very quickly lost sight of him behind the trees on the west edge of the tank.

The black face of the bird was distinctly visible through the glasses but I could not distinguish a knob of any size, so that it was probably a young bird. The plumage was pure white except for a greyish patch on the tip of the wing or on the rump, probably the former, as this patch was distinctly visible when the bird flew off.

Another feature that I particularly noticed was the peculiarly graceful 'S' shaped carriage of the neck which again distinguishes this bird from *Cygnus musicus*. I shall be very interested to hear if any reports of any further appearances come in. I can only account for his appearance so far south as this by the fact that during the last week there have been phenomenal rain and thunder storms in these parts which may perhaps have been accounted for by some severe storms in the north. The only other possibility is that the bird may have escaped from some Zoo, or have been a tame bird from some private waters.

CLUB OF WESTERN INDIA POONA.

W. B. TREVENEN,

13th November 1922.

MAJOR.

NO. XVI.—A NOTE ON THE MIGRATION OF THE EASTERN GREY
WAGTAIL (*MOTACILLA CINEREA MELANOPE*, Pall.).

This race of the Grey Wagtail is said by Hartert (V.P.F.I., 302) to breed from the Ural and the Caucasus through Siberia to Kamschatka and the Kurile Isles but not north of the 64th degree. He adds that it appears as a migrant in the

countries south of that area, through India, Anadamans, The Sunda Isles, Celebes, Moluccas, New Guinea, Hainan, and Formosa.

In the area with which we are more immediately concerned it breeds in varying degrees of abundance about the hills of the North West Frontiers of India. I find the following breeding records. In the hills about Quetta it is widely distributed but very local, breeding between 7,000 and 9,500 ft. (Meinertzhagen, Ibis, 1920, 147). It nests freely along the streams of the Sufed Koh from 6,000 to 8,000 ft. (Whitehead, Ibis, 1909, 240). Wardlaw Ramsey found it breeding in Afghanistan. It appears to breed throughout Kashmir including Chitral and Gilgit at elevations over 6,000 ft.

In my own experience it breeds commonly in Kulu from 4,000 ft. upwards and in Lahul at altitudes of 10,000—12,000 ft., though I did not meet with it in Spiti. Brooks found it nesting in the Bhagirattee Valley (S.F., iii, 250). Osmaston found it common about 9,000 feet in the Tons Valley, Gahrwal (Jour., B.N.H.S., xi, 67).

Further east I have traced no breeding records for the Himalayas and other ranges of the North East Frontier.

Published records, which need not be detailed here, shew that in winter the Grey Wagtail spreads throughout the whole of India, Ceylon, Burma and Tenasserim, even visiting the islands of the Bay of Bengal, *viz.*, the Andamans and Nicobars.

An endeavour to trace its migrations is very unsuccessful owing to the lack of carefully recorded observations. In the North West the first migrants appear in the last ten days of August. Thus Whitehead says that it appears in the plains of Kohat towards the end of August. At Simla in 1918 and 1922 the first birds were observed on 20th August. At Dalhousie I have seen it on 28th August, and at Dharmsala my first records for 1921 and 1922 have been on the 24th August and 19th August respectively. Throughout September migrating birds are found commonly all along the Outer Himalayas of the Punjab.

In addition to the hill records for August I have two for the plains namely a female shot by myself at Hissar on 23rd August 1914 and one shot as far south as Chikalda Berar on 22nd August 1912 by J. Donald (Jour., B.N.H.S., xxi, 1329).

The migrating birds must move South very rapidly as I find that by the end of September the species may be found throughout its Indian range. At Gujranwala, Punjab, I have obtained it personally on the 15th September. At Mount Abu and Northern Gujarat it arrives about the beginning of September (Butler S.F., iii, 489). Whitehead first observed it at Sehore, C.I., on 26th September (Jour., B.N.H.S., xxi, 160). Davison says it arrives in Southern Mysore in September (S.F., x, 395) and Bourdillon (S.F., iv, 401) says that it arrives early in September in the Travancore hills.

On the Eastern side its progress seems to be equally rapid. Scully says that it is common in the valley of Nepal from the beginning of September. It arrives in Upper Assam in September (Stevens, J.B.N.H.S., xxiii, 266). In the islands of the Bay of Bengal Hume obtained four specimens from the 4th to the 9th September. (S.F., ii, 237), and Hopwood has recorded the 20th September as the date of the first appearance in Arakan (J.B.N.H.S., xxi, 1203).

The movement of the Grey Wagtail northwards on the spring migration is not easy to trace as the records are somewhat contradictory. Commencing from the South, Bourdillon states that it does not leave the Travancore Hills till May, and Butler saw it at Belgaum as late as the 10th. May (S.F., ix, 410). It is also said to be common round the lake at KodiKanal and on the small streams of the Palni Hills till the beginning of May (S.F., x, 477). Yet in Southern Mysore they are said to have almost all left by the end of March (S.F., x, 395).

At Sehore, C.I., Whitehead gives the date of its departure as April 1st; Butler says it remains quite till the end of April in Northern Gujarat, and Stevens gives it till April in Upper Assam.

In the Punjab plains I have no note of it later than April 12. At Dharmsala however in 1921 and 1922 I have found the spring migration in force through April till about the middle of May.

It would be of interest if our members would send in their notes on the occurrence of this bird in different areas, with special reference to its status.

HUGH WHISTLER,

DHARMSALA, 10th November 1922.

INDIAN POLICE.

[The note given above though primarily written for the benefit of an individual member of the Society is of interest to all our ornithological members and is therefore published in the Journal.—EDITORS.]

No. XVII.—THE ROOSTING FLIGHT OF CROWS.

I am inclined to support Mr. H. Whistler's opinion that the flight of crows described in Mr. Basil Edwardes' letter (in Note No. VIII, page 804, Vol. XXVIII), was merely the usual evening flight to their roosting places; in corroboration the following notes may be of interest:—At Roorkee, in the N.-W. corner of the U. P., during the cold weather from November to March, the crows flight regularly every evening to roost in a huge tract of "nurkul" or "null" grass in the Solani Kadir about 15 miles away. One sees them leave the station about 5 p.m.; while at the other end, near the roosting place, the flight of crows begins about 5-30 p.m. and lasts about 20 minutes to half an hour; the column being about 200 yards wide and stretching as far as one can see some miles; the column is doubtless joined *en route* by all the crows in villages near the line of flight. One curious thing is that they are extraordinarily punctual; night fall being at that time of year 6-15 p.m. The particular bed of "nurkul" patronized by them is about 2 miles by $\frac{3}{4}$ mile wide, the grass being some 15-feet high, and very dense, and growing in deep water. Besides the line of flight from the N.-W., from Roorkee, there are two other similar columns arriving at the same time, one from the North and one from the East, these consisting doubtless of the crows from the villages in those directions; these two columns are of the same size as the first as far as one can judge; so the number of crows roosting there must run well over the hundred thousand. All the crows are the Common Grey-necked kind (*C. splendens*), I do not recollect ever seeing a single Jungle crow (*C. macrorhynchus*).

The natives say that the reason for choosing these grass beds is, that the crows get shelter from the night wind and warmth, and are safe from cats, etc., and that the only thing that does get at them is a big owl. I have sometimes heard at night an appalling uproar among the crows there, probably due to such an attack.

During the hot weather and rains on the other hand, the crows of the above species flight at evening into the station and roost in the trees there, probably because they get the benefit of any wind there may be, and are cool. They are such a nuisance in the native soldiers' lines, that it is customary for the officers to organize crow-shoots in the rains to get rid of them. The flights at this time of year are however small, only small parties of crows, and one does not see the huge columns, doubtless since every village has the crows from the country round it roosting in the trees in the village.

The above is from my personal observation during most years in the past 20 years, and the same roosting bed of grass has been in use during that period.

SRINAGAR, 26th August 1922.

A. H. CUNNINGHAM,

COLONEL.

[The Dusky Horned Owl (*Bubo coromandus*) kills numbers of crows at such roosts.—EDS.]